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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: CAN GOVERNOR WA'ELI LEAD BASRAH AFTER PIC?

REF: (A) BASRAH 02, (B) 06 BASRAH 156

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DOS.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On January 11, 2007, the director of the Regional Embassy Office (REO) Basrah and Basrah Provincial Governor Mohammad al-Wa'eli held a meeting that dealt with the need for strong leaders to take charge of security after Basrah goes to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). The REO director said there are few people capable of assuming the task and now is the moment for such leaders "to step up." The governor, one of the few politicians to support Britain's demolition of the militia-infested Serious Crimes Unit of the Basrah police, eagerly explained his ideas to strengthen security in Basrah. End Summary.

#### BASRAH NEEDS STRONG LEADER AFTER PROVINCIAL IRAQI CONTROL

¶2. (C) On January 11, 2007, the director of the Regional Embassy Office (REO) Basrah, Louis Bono, and Basrah Provincial Governor Mohammad al-Wa'eli held a meeting about violence in the oil-rich province and the need for a strong leader to take charge of security after the British relinquish control. The director praised the governor as one of the few Basrah politicians who publicly supported the British raid on the militia-infested Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) of the Basrah police and the demolition of the headquarters on December 25. (Ref A) The British action was denounced by 11 members of the Basrah Provincial Council, who called for official disengagement with UK forces in Basrah. (Note: The raid was overwhelmingly supported by the populace. End note)

¶3. (C) The director said that the Coalition Forces are trying to identify leaders who can provide firm rule for Basrah after the British relinquish control over security. He noted that, in the view of the British and U.S. governments, there are few people capable of providing strong leadership and strengthening democratic institutions, and now is the moment for such leaders "to step up."

#### GOVERNOR WA'ELI EXPRESSES COMMON CAUSE WITH U.S.

¶4. (C) Governor Wa'eli said he shares the director's views about Basrah's security problems and the incompetence of the Emergency Security Committee (ESC) to solve them. If he had had the authority, he would have ordered the destruction of the SCU long ago. He added that his hatred of the SCU and Iran's clandestine support of it is a matter of record (Ref B). He said militias took control of the Basrah police when the state organs of Saddam's Baathist regime were abolished and new ones were constituted under the occupation authorities. In light of

the overwhelming degree of police corruption, he said a top-to-bottom overhaul of the police forces by the central government is needed. He recently asked Prime Minister Maliki to replace the ESC and chief of police and proposed that the prime minister establish a new force made up of tribal fighters to counter the current corrupt forces. While his job consists primarily of political and administrative duties, the governor asserted that he has made important contributions to Basrah's security. He said that he is eager to cooperate with the REO Basrah to increase its protection from rocket and mortar attacks.

15. (C) Comment. The governor showed unusual animation and engagement in this most recent encounter. Despite the governor's reputation for brutality and corruption, his political skills are undeniable and his anti-Iranian views are well known. This makes him one of the few people in Basrah with whom the U.S. government could conceivably stand on common ground in the effort to stabilize Iraq's oil capital. End comment.

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